

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-7 and 30-36 are presently active. Claims 8-29 have been cancelled without prejudice; and Claims 1, 7, 30, and 36 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-7 and 30-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by European Patent Application No. EP 0768582 A1 to Ogura (hereinafter "the '582 application").

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the interview granted Applicants' representatives on July 28, 2003, at which time a proposed amendment to Claim 1 was discussed and arguments in support of patentability were presented. In particular, the Examiner agreed that the '582 patent may fail to disclose detecting a transmission fault through a *process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices*. However, no final agreement on the patentability of the claims was reached, pending the Examiner's further consideration of the claims upon formal submission of a supplemental response to the outstanding Office Action.

Amended Claim 1 is directed to an image-forming device management system, comprising: (1) a plurality of image forming devices; (2) a central service station for providing a maintenance service for the image forming devices; and (3) a communication control unit connected to each of the image forming devices by a signal line, the communication control unit connecting one of the image forming devices to the central service station by a communication network. Moreover, each of the image forming devices is

configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and communication control unit over a predetermined period *through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices* and to display a signal line separation message when the image forming device detects the transmission fault. Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that each of the image forming devices is configured to detect a transmission fault over a predetermined period *through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices*. The changes to Claim 1 are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

Regarding the rejection of Claim 1 as anticipated by the '582 application, the '582 application is directed to an image forming device management system for managing a plurality of image forming devices using an administrative device connected through a communication control unit to the image forming devices. However, Applicants submit that the '582 application fails to disclose image forming devices configured to detect a transmission fault from at least one of the central service station and the communication control unit through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices. As previously stated, the "Transmitted Normally?" inquiries of Figures 21 and 22 of the '582 application are only initiated when either the remote reporting key is pressed or the self-diagnosis process is started. Moreover, the "Report Normally?" inquiries of Figures 21 and 22 are not made unless the reporting data was transmitted normally to the communication control unit, in which case there could not be a transmission fault.

In addition, Applicants note that the passages of the '582 application noted in the Advisory Action are directed to calls made *by the communication control unit* in order to forward stored data received from the image forming devices to a particular destination, and the action taken if the call is busy. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the noted '582 passages are unrelated to *each of the image forming devices* detecting a

transmission fault from the communication control unit or the central service station *through a process periodically initiated by each of the image forming devices*. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6) as anticipated by the '582 application.

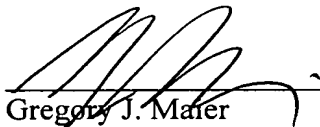
Claims 7, 30, and 36 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in amended Claim 1. Moreover, Claims 7, 30, and 36 have been amended in a manner analogous to the amendment to Claim 1. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above for the patentability of Claim 1, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of Claims 7, 30, and 36 (and all associated dependent claims) as anticipated by the '582 application.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1 (and dependent Claims 2-6), Claim 7, Claim 30 (and dependent Claims 31-35), and Claim 36 patentably define over the '582 application.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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